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Les Elements—L'Eau
By Charles Le Brun

TAPISSERIES DE MANUFACTURE DE GOBELINS

1662-1913



Clio. By P. V. Galland

ACCORDING to Fénaille, the first tenture made by the factory of the Gobelins, after it became a Royal establishment, from designs actually made for the work, was the series known as "The Elements." The designs for this series were executed by Charles Le Brun in 1664, about the same time that he was also making the designs for the series entitled "The Seasons." The illustration opposite this page and entitled "L'Eau" (Water) therefore shows one of the tapestries in the first set to which can be attributed entirely the provenance of the Gobelins.

The design of this tapestry shows, in the midst of the sea, Neptune on the right and Thetis on the left seated on a chariot drawn by sea horses.

Neptune holds his trident and Thetis a shield with the monogram of the King (Louis XIV) and a Latin inscription.

In the foreground are a number of fishes and two Tritons; on the left, the forward part of a ship; on the right, a rock and a tree. In the border, composed of shells, bundles of oars, harpoons, tridents, etc., the arms of the King are supported by two dolphins. The two designs on the sides represent, on the right, a vessel leaving port, and on the left a French vessel pursuing a pirate ship. Below, in the cartouch, is an inscription in Latin which glorifies the King, especially with reference to his suppression of piracy and his encouragement of commerce. The four devices and inscriptions in

the border represent: A sea—Piety—*“Nusquam data littora transit.”* A fountain playing—Magnanimity—*“Petit impiger ortus.”* A River—Goodness—*“Facit omnia laeta.”* A Dolphin—Valor—*“Hunc et monstra timent.”*

The celebrated Gobelin factory is named after Gehan Gobelin, who lived in 1450 in a small workshop in a poor quarter of Paris, near the Seine. Through patient experiment Gehan, who was a dyer, discovered an especially beautiful crimson dye of fast colour. So greatly did the works prosper that toward the end of the century the Gobelins went into business as weavers as well as dyers. By 1603 the works had become so well known that the brothers, Jean and Philibert Gobelin had established themselves in a fine building in the Faubourg Saint Maral, Paris, where by order of King Henry IV, they were joined by two Flemish weavers and opened tapestry works under royal patronage. In 1662, Louis XIV, acting under advice of Colbert, his Minister of Finance, created out of the Gobelin works a royal manufactory which he subsidised under the title *“Manufacture des Meubles de la Couronne.”*

This foundation, under the direction of Colbert, united in one and the same manufactory, the studios of the Louvre galleries with the tapestry workers Henri Laurent and Le Febvre; the workshops of Hippolyte de Comans at the Gobelins with the tapestry workers Jean Jans and Jean De la Croix; and the workshops of Maincy, established by Nicolas Fouquet near the château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, under the direction of Charles Le Brun.

Before the foundation or consolidation as the creation of the Gobelins may be called, Le Brun while employed by Fouquet had made designs for a

portière of *“Fame”* (Portière des Renommées) intended for the manufactory of tapestry at Maincy. With the consolidation this design and the tapestry model made from it by the painter Yvert Père were transferred to the Gobelins and the portière des Renommées was woven there. This then appears to be the first portière actually made by the Royal factory of the Gobelins.

In this portière, as originally designed for Fouquet, the arms of France and of Navarre, surmounted by the Royal crown upheld by two cupids, are framed in by two figures of women rising out of cornucopias. Beneath them and resting on the base of the composition are a dog on the left and a lion on the right representing Fidelity and Courage.

Colbert had made, for his personal use and with his own armorial bearings, a certain number of these portières with alterations in the design. The women are full length and uphold, instead of laurel garlands, a drapery on which are placed the arms of Colbert. The lion is replaced by a cock.

This composition was further altered at the Gobelins. The women rising out of cornucopias uphold garlands of flowers and represent Fame and Flora; the animals in the lower part of the composition are replaced by trophies of arms and flags. It is in this form the design appears in the illustration on the opposite page.

Reference to the pictures of tapestries reproduced in this issue of THE LOTUS will show characteristic representation of the work produced at the Gobelin factory during the four periods from the time it became a Royal establishment to the end of the eighteenth century and two tapestries made there in our own day.



Portière des Renommées
By Charles Le Brun

LES MOIS LUCAS

JULY—SIGN OF LEO

Executed in 1683 after a Design attributed to
Lucas of Leyden.

THE month of July shows, in front, some figures on horseback hawking; in the background, children bathing.

Hawking—A woman, seen full face, seated on a white horse, holding a falcon on her right hand, is riding towards the left accompanied by a horseman and by a handsome esquire on foot, who is carrying several birds and holds a rod in his right hand. Further on, to the left, children are bathing; peasants are mowing hay and putting it in a wagon. On the right are two men, each carrying a stick over his shoulder; in the background, a farmhouse. In the foreground, in the centre, two little dogs and, at the foot of a tree on the right, a rabbit.

The medallion in the middle of the top border represents the sign of the Zodiac belonging to the month.



LES PORTIÈRES DES DIEUX

JUNO—AIR

After a Design by Claude Audran, the Younger, 1699

UNDER a portico garlanded with flowers and feathers, Juno, seated full face, dressed in a tunic, a drapery on her knees, holds her sceptre in her right hand.

Beneath her, in the clouds, on the right, a winged head of a child is blowing the winds; on the left a child with wings is standing by Juno.

Above the middle of the base, which supports a vase, cornucopias, jewels and other valuable articles, is placed a small organ between two trumpets. On each side a nude child; the one on the right holds a Pan's pipe, and another child, on the left, is playing the flute.

In the model for high warp the child on the right is playing a flageolet and differs in pose.

On the consols, at the right and left, precious vases of orfèvrerie, on which are perched peacocks. On the right the peacock is seen full face and on the left from the back.

Above small columns, bagpipes and birds of paradise; in the middle, in a medallion, a bear or a peacock, according to model.

On each side of the small columns a cascade of different objects; battledores, shuttlecocks and two little pictures, one showing a bird of paradise and the other a small quadruped.

Les Portières des Dieux was a famous suite and was frequently copied during the eighteenth century. The compositions are Audran's, the figures Louis de Boulogne's and Corneille's, the animals by Louis Desportes. The suite represents the four seasons and the elements.



TENTURE DE CHANCELLERIE

After a Design by Vernansal and Audran, 1719.

THE hangings designed under the name of Chancellerie were composed of several tapestries and portières with blue ground marked with fleurs de lys, decorated with the arms of the King and the emblems of the Chancellor or Keeper of the Seals, framed in borders bearing the same emblems. The tenture de Chancellerie was presented to the Chancellor or Keeper of the Seals.

The hanging illustrated on the opposite page was made for Keeper of the Seals and acting Chancellor d'Argenson in 1719, Chancellor d'Aguesseau being exiled 1718-1721. Certain pieces of this tenture still were preserved by the d'Argenson family in 1904.



HISTOIRE DE DON QUICHOTTE

After designs made by Charles Coypel,
1714-1751.

THE first mention of the celebrated tapestry of Don Quixote, a tenture consisting of no less than twenty-eight pieces, is found in the Accounts of Public Buildings for the year 1714.

"Year 1714—December 1: to M. Fontenay, painter, 1100 livres in payment of a picture representing Don Quixote who thinks he is going to receive the order of knighthood, which he has made to be done in tapestry at the royal factory of the Gobelins." Engerand, in his "Inventory of pictures ordered and bought by the Administration of the Royal Buildings (1709-1792)," has drawn from this entry the inference that the first painting for the tapestry was made by Belin de Fontenay and not by Charles Coypel.

The entry which caused this mistaken impression, is, however, easy to explain. The tapestries of the History of Don Quixote are composed of a frame very rich in decorations and in flowers and of a picture of reduced size placed in the midst of the frame. Each picture represents a scene in the History of Don Quixote. The ornamental composition forms the most important part of the tapestry, and the picture which gives its name to each piece is only the adjunct. Accordingly, a higher price was paid to Belinde Fontenay and later to Claude Audran for the composition than to Charles Coypel for the pictures. But Coypel's pictures, later on were engraved, the originals are preserved and his name always is mentioned as the designer of the suite. The illustration, which shows how elaborate the border is—that of the oblong hangings is even more so—is of one of the Don Quixote tapestries owned by Mr. Morgan. It represents Don Quixote requesting, through Sancho, permission to look at the Duchess. The Don Quixote series is remarkable for the wealth of the beautiful rose du Barry colour in the alentours.

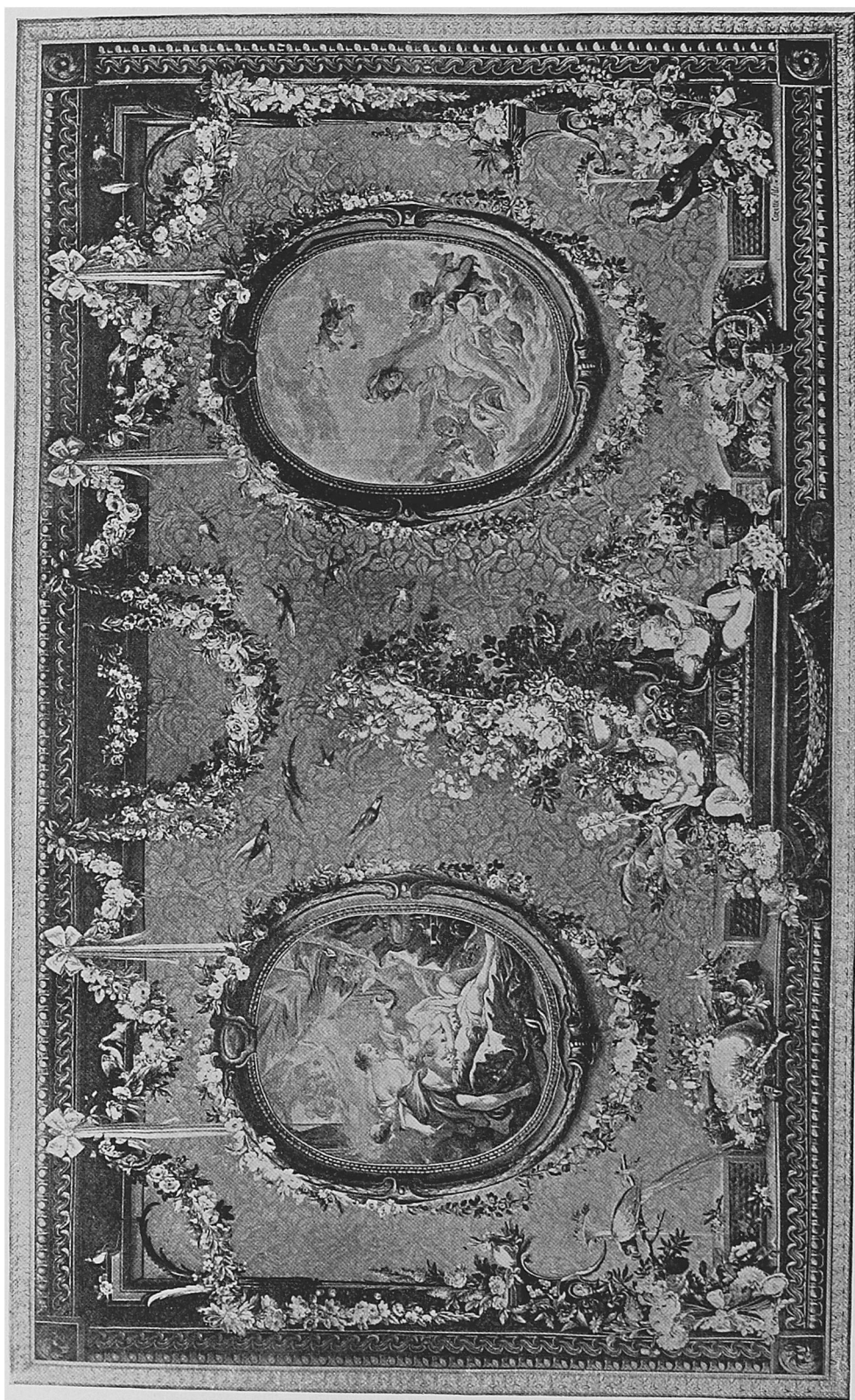


TENTURE DE FRANÇOIS BOUCHER

L'Amour et Psyché and Vénus sur les Eaux.

THE most famous artist connected with the Gobelins works was François Boucher, whose artistic direction of the establishment falls between 1755-1770. Yet, in spite of his fame as a painter and the charm of the tapestries that bear his designs, the decadence of the Gobelins may be said to date from his connection with the manufactory. For practically from that time on may be dated the making of tapestry from paintings instead of from designs prepared with a true "feeling" for tapestry.

As a rule in the Boucher tapestries, only the pictures in the medallions are his, the alentours being the work of others. The two medallions in the Boucher tapestry opposite represent Amor and Psyche and Venus on the Waves. The tapestry is in the Ministry of Marine of France.



PORTIÈRE À FOND D'ARGENT

After a Design probably by Berain, 1696-1699.

AMONG tapestries of the late eighteenth century, is a tenture with silver background from the collection of Baron Gustave de Rothschild.

This tenture is composed of two portières and four narrower panels, with the arms of Charles of Lorraine, Comte de Marsan, and of his second wife, Catherine Thérèse Goyon de Matignon.

Each portière represents, after the decorative style of Berain, an architectural base supporting a river-god seated on the right, a nymph of Venus seated on the left, on each side of a pedestal supporting a goddess seated with a cupid who gives her a wreath of flowers.

The ensemble of this architectural subject forms a fountain and is accompanied in the center foreground by a Triton blowing into a shell and holding the reins of two sea horses. Above the goddess, in the middle, joined armorial bearings, surmounted by a crown between two crowned eagles, are placed before a baldachin which is attached to the top part of the composition. On each side, among the decorations which rest upon the base, a female winged genius bearing a basket of grapes and above, in each angle, a cupid and an eagle; garlands of flowers join them to the central baldachin.

Large foliage rises from below and supports the decorations in the midst of garlands of flowers. A curved decorative emblem, with two birds, surmounts the armorial bearings.

